

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Western District of Texas**FILED**

December 14, 2023

CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

United States of America

v.

CODY S. SMITH

Defendant(s)

BY:

LRT

DEPUTY

Case No.

1:23-mj-853-DH**CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of December 4-13, 2023in the county of Travis

in the

WesternDistrict of District

, the defendant(s) violated:

*Code Section**Offense Description*

Title 18, Section 1704

Unlawful Possession USPS Keys

Title 18, Section 1708

Mail Theft

Title 18, Section 2114

Robbery - U.S. Mail and U.S.

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

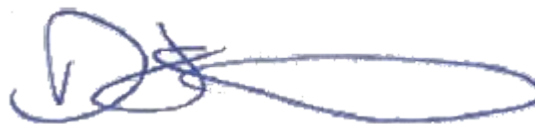
See Attached Affidavit

☐ Continued on the attached sheet.*Complainant's signature*

Scott Miller, U.S. Postal Inspector

Printed name and title

- ☐ Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.
☐ Sworn to telephonically and signed electronically.

Date: 12/14/2023*Judge's signature*City and state: Austin, Texas

Dustin Howell, United States Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT

I, Scott Miller, being duly sworn, depose and state that I am a U.S. Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service, duly appointed according to law and acting as such.

1. I have been employed as a criminal investigator (Postal Inspector) with the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) since 2012. During my employment, I have conducted and/or participated in hundreds of investigations involving offenses relating to the United States Postal Service (USPS), including but not limited to identity theft, mail theft, narcotics trafficking, money laundering, burglary, armed robbery, aggravated assault, sexual assault, child pornography, homicide, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), hazardous materials, threatening communications, and International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)/export violations.
2. Prior to being a Postal Inspector, I was an Investigative Specialist in the Special Surveillance Group of the FBI from 2003 to 2012. My responsibilities with the FBI included conducting covert and undercover surveillance operations for counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and espionage investigations. During this time, I planned, led, and/or participated in over 2,000 surveillance operations that gathered intelligence on foreign intelligence agencies and international terrorist organizations and aided in the prosecution of hundreds of subjects of foreign terrorism and espionage investigations.
3. Throughout my USPIS career I have attended training through the USPIS and other agencies. I attended Basic Inspector's Training, a twelve week training course accredited by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation. The Basic Inspector's Training course included instruction in criminal investigations of prohibited mailings (such as narcotics and child pornography), mail theft, identity theft, mail fraud, internet crimes, threats, assaults, robberies, and burglaries. I have completed additional training, including but not limited to identity theft investigations training through the San Francisco County (CA) District Attorney's Office, search warrant laws and writing techniques course through the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) Northern California High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program, cell phone forensics training through the USPIS, field legal training through the USPIS, search and seizure field legal training through the California Narcotics Officer Association (CNOA), and wall investigations and confidential informant training through CNOA. Further, I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Molecular Biology and a Master of Science degree in Strategic Intelligence with a specialization in Denial and Deception Operations.
4. I am currently assigned to the Austin Multifunctional Team for the USPIS Houston Division where I have conducted and/or participated in multiple investigations into mail theft, identity theft, wire fraud, and money laundering. During these investigations, I have often monitored suspect communications and location data; conducted searches of suspects' residences, phones, vehicles, and persons; and analyzed suspect financial activity.

5. The facts set forth in the instant affidavit are based upon my personal observations, my training and experience, and information that I obtained from other law enforcement officers familiar with the investigation. Because this affidavit is being submitted for the sole purpose of establishing probable cause, it does not purport to represent or set forth all my knowledge of, or investigation into, the instant matter. Rather, I have set forth facts that I believe are sufficient to establish probable cause for the issuance of the requested arrest warrant. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all conversations and statements described herein are related in substance and in part only.
6. Based on my training and experience in similar investigations, coupled with the evidence set forth in this affidavit, I submit that there is sufficient probable cause to believe that CODY SMITH, CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA, and other conspirators, aided and abetted by each other, stole, purloined, and obtained official USPS Arrow Keys, also commonly referred to as master keys, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1704, to facilitate the Theft of U.S. Mail, in violation of Title 18 U.S.C. § 1708. There is also probable cause to believe that CODY SMITH, CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA, and others conspired to accost multiple letter carriers with the intent to rob, steal, and purloin mail matter in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2114, Robbery U.S. Mail.
7. A USPS Arrow Key ("Arrow Key") is a universal key or master key utilized by USPS employees, including Letter Carriers, to access collection boxes, outdoor parcel lockers, cluster box units, and apartment panels. Given the broad access they afford, Arrow Keys are designated as accountable property. The USPS has implemented extensive security measures governing the possession and use of Arrow Keys by employees. Arrow Keys must be signed out each day by employees and returned at the close of their tour of duty. The keys are engraved as USPS property, with a unique serial number. USPS regulations require that the loss or theft of an Arrow Key requires a corresponding entry into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), in the same manner that a stolen firearm would be documented. These internal controls and security measures reflect the significant risk that the Arrow Keys pose to the secure mail delivery system if criminal offenders illegally obtain them.
8. Based on my training and experience in other mail theft and financial fraud investigations, I know that criminal organizations engaged in fraud seek to obtain Arrow Keys for a variety of reasons. I know that criminal organizations recognize that illegally obtaining an Arrow Key will allow them to access hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of mail receptacles within a given metropolitan area. In doing so, criminal organizations can conduct large scale volume attacks to steal specific items, such as incoming and outgoing financial instruments, such as personal checks and money orders, which they illegally alter and negotiate at substantial profit. The unlawful use of the Arrow Key allows the criminal offenders to conceal the attack, as the victims are often not aware that the checks were stolen until they review their banking records.
9. Based on my training and experience, I know that another more recent variation of the fraud is spreading exponentially throughout the United States. With the most recent evolution of

the fraud scheme, the process has become fragmented, with one group of offenders stealing the checks, using anonymous messaging platforms such as Telegram to post partial images of the stolen checks and advertise them for sale, where they can be viewed and ultimately illegally purchased by other criminal organizations located throughout the United States. The value of the stolen checks is generally greatly discounted, with the illicit market price determined based on the checks' face value, the date stolen, security features, and other factors. Once a price is agreed upon by the conspirators, the illicit funds are transferred to the selling party through pseudo-anonymous methods such as cryptocurrency and/or CashApp, and the complete check image sent to the purchaser. The criminal organizations who purchase the stolen checks generally use the image to create a new check, using key data from the original instrument. In most instances, the purchasing criminal organizations change only the payee's name, as they know that changing the account data, issue date, or issue amount may trigger internal control features monitored by the issuing financial institutions. These newly created checks are then negotiated through networks of bank accounts opened using stolen identities or nominees recruited through messaging applications and social media, all at a substantial illicit profit.

10. Based on my training and experience in other robbery and mail theft investigations, I know that criminal elements will undertake significant steps to gain access to Arrow Keys. I know that within the last five years, the number of USPS employees assaulted and murdered to obtain Arrow Keys has increased dramatically. Between October 2022 and March 2023, more than 300 USPS Letter Carriers were robbed for their assigned Arrow Keys. I know that USPS vehicles and facilities have been burglarized to access the keys. I know that Arrow Keys are very valuable and are greatly coveted within criminal organizations.
11. In September 2023, Postal Inspectors in Austin began investigating a criminal organization engaged in a conspiracy to rob Postal Service Letter Carriers to unlawfully obtain official USPS Arrow Keys. The keys were used to facilitate a scheme to steal checks, money orders, credit cards, debit cards, and other items of value from the U. S. Mail, and fraudulently negotiate these stolen wares for substantial illicit profit.
12. On September 30, 2023, Postal Inspectors arrested CAMREN HAMILTON and JONATHAN RANGEL within minutes of the successful robbery of a letter carrier for an assigned Arrow Key in Round Rock, Texas. At the time of the arrest, Postal Inspectors noted that HAMILTON's cellular telephone was actively mapping directions to 1301 Crossing Place, Unit 1015, Austin, Texas 78741, suggesting that they were taking the newly stolen key to the residence at the time of their arrest. Postal Inspectors determined that suspect CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA was on the lease and a known resident at that address. Postal Inspectors recovered a loaded 9mm handgun from the vehicle driven by HAMILTON. Postal Inspectors were able to trace the handgun to co-conspirator CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA, who had purchased the handgun in a private sale using the name, "Chris Santana." The search of the vehicle also resulted in the recovery of one or more financial instruments that had been stolen from the mail and the payee name altered to CODY SMITH.


13. On that same date, Postal Inspectors conducted a knock and talk interview at 1301 Crossing Place, Unit 1015, Austin, Texas 78741. Postal Inspectors spoke with CODY SMITH, who identified himself as HAMILTON's cousin. SMITH, a Saint Louis native, claimed that he had recently relocated to Austin and started a job at Tesla. SMITH stated that he and HAMILTON grew up together in Saint Louis, where they lived together for a period. SMITH denied any knowledge of the robberies, mail theft, or check fraud.
14. HAMILTON and RANGEL were arrested pursuant to federal complaints filed within the Western District of Texas. Defendant HAMILTON was later released on conditions, while defendant RANGEL was detained.
15. On or about October 10, 2023, defendant CAMREN HAMILTON and suspect CODY SMITH rented the residence located at 9701 Spectrum Drive, Apartment 1205, Austin, Texas 78717. Both individuals signed the lease, which required their identification to be presented and verified through the apartment company's background check system. Postal Inspectors noted this as significant, as HAMILTON had successfully petitioned the Court during his detention proceedings to allow him to reside with his family in Saint Louis, Missouri.
16. On October 17, 2023, HAMILTON and RANGEL were indicted within the Western District of Texas on multiple counts of 18 U.S.C. § 2114, Robbery of U.S. Mail. As of the date of this affidavit, RANGEL remains incarcerated and HAMILTON is free on bond pursuant to the conditions of his release, pending adjudication of the case.
17. On December 4, 2023, a USPS Letter Carrier (Letter Carrier #6) was on-duty delivering U.S. Mail at the residence(s) located at 2017 Lucky Lane, Leander, Texas 78641. Letter Carrier #6 was approached by two black males wearing dark hooded sweatshirts and masks. Letter Carrier #6 advised that the subjects demanded that he "give up the key." Letter Carrier #6 immediately recognized that the subjects were referring to his assigned USPS Arrow Key, which was attached to his belt and hanging at his side. Letter Carrier #6 stated that the subjects repeated the declaration and then ripped the key from his body. Letter Carrier #6 stated that the subjects then ran away. Official USPS records identified the serial number of the Arrow Key assigned to Letter Carrier #6 as '83-21826'. Based on witness statements and available video recovered from adjacent residences and businesses, Inspectors determined that the subjects ran to a waiting vehicle. Postal Inspectors noted that one or more of the recovered video segments captured the two black males entering a dark colored 4-door sedan, driven by an unknown co-conspirator. Inspectors noted that the vehicle was consistent with a late model Toyota Corolla.
18. On December 9, 2023, a USPS Letter Carrier (Letter Carrier #7) was on-duty delivering U.S. Mail in the apartment building located at 2691 La Frontera Boulevard, Round Rock, Texas 78681. Letter Carrier #7 stated she was inside the attached parking garage when she was approached by two black males wearing dark hooded sweatshirts and masks. Letter Carrier #7 advised that the subjects demanded that she give them her "key." Letter Carrier #7 immediately recognized that the subjects were referring to her assigned USPS Arrow Key,

which was attached to her belt and hanging at her side. Letter Carrier #7 stated that the subjects separated and attempted to encircle her. Letter Carrier #7 stated that she began screaming for help and one or more witnesses came to her aid, causing the suspects to flee before they could obtain the key. Based on witness statements and available video recovered from adjacent residences and businesses, Inspectors determined that the subjects fled to a waiting black 4-door sedan, driven by an unknown co-conspirator. Inspectors noted that the method of operation, the description of the suspects, and the getaway vehicle were consistent with the robbery of Letter Carrier #6 on December 4, 2023.

19. Based on witness statements and available video, Postal Inspectors were able to identify the getaway vehicle as a black 2022 Toyota Corolla, bearing Texas license 'RTF0763'. Postal Inspectors queried available Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) records and determined the vehicle was registered to Enterprise Rental Car Company. Postal Inspectors reviewed available rental records and determined that the vehicle was rented on or about November 29, 2023, by CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA.
20. Postal Inspectors reviewed available license plate recognition (LPR) records and noted that the suspect rental vehicle bearing license RTF0763 was scanned on December 4, 2023, in the Leander/Cedar Park area within approximately ten minutes of the robbery of Letter Carrier #6. A review of available LPR records disclosed that the suspect rental vehicle bearing license RTF0763 was also scanned on December 9, 2023, within one-half mile of the robbery location and within minutes of the attack on Letter Carrier #7.
21. Postal Inspectors knew based on the instant investigation that the listed renter, CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA, was a known co-conspirator of defendant CAMREN HAMILTON and suspect CODY SMITH. Postal Inspectors knew that the handgun recovered incident to HAMILTON's arrest had been traced to CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA. In addition, MOSQUERA was one of the renters for 1301 Crossing Place, Unit 1015, Austin, Texas 78741, the address that was being actively mapped on HAMILTON's cellular telephone when he was arrested immediately following a successful robbery of a Letter Carrier for their assigned Arrow Key, and the address where Postal Inspectors interviewed CODY SMITH.
22. On December 9, 2023, a USPS Letter Carrier (Letter Carrier #8) was on-duty delivering U.S. Mail in the apartment building located at 9801 W. Parmer Lane, Austin, Texas 78717. Letter Carrier #8 stated that he was delivering mail in the mailroom when he was approached by two black males wearing dark hooded sweatshirts and masks. Letter Carrier #8 advised that the subjects demanded that he give them "the key." Letter Carrier #8 immediately recognized that the subjects were referring to his assigned USPS Arrow Key. Letter Carrier #8 stated that he began screaming for help from nearby residents, causing the suspects to flee before they could obtain the key. Based on witness statements and available video recovered from adjacent residences and businesses, Inspectors determined that the subjects fled to a waiting black 4-door sedan, driven by an unknown co-conspirator. Inspectors noted that the method of operation, the description of the suspects, and the getaway vehicle were consistent with the robbery of Letter Carrier #6 and Letter Carrier #7.

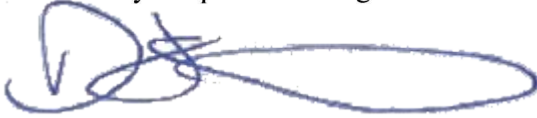
23. Based on witness statements and available video, Postal Inspectors were able to identify the getaway vehicle as the same black 2022 Toyota Corolla, bearing Texas license RTF0763. Postal Inspectors recovered video which clearly captured the license plate, as well as images of the driver and two black male passengers. Postal Inspectors observed that the driver was not wearing a mask or hood. Postal Inspectors reviewed available known photographs of CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA. Postal Inspectors believe that CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA is the subject driving the suspect vehicle.
24. Postal Inspectors reviewed available open source and law enforcement records and determined that CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA and another co-conspirator had recently moved into the residence located at 9701 Spectrum Drive, Apartment 11218, Austin, Texas 78717. Postal Inspectors learned that MOSQUERA and another suspect rented the apartment on or about October 12, 2023. Postal Inspectors recalled that defendant CAMREN HAMILTON and suspect CODY SMITH had also rented Apartment 1205 at 9701 Spectrum Drive in October 2023. Inspectors learned that CAMREN HAMILTON, CODY SMITH, CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA, and other co-conspirators had all toured the apartment complex together.
25. On December 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, Postal Inspectors conducted multiple covert surveillance operations at 9701 Spectrum Drive, Austin, Texas 78717. Postal Inspectors observed the suspect rental vehicle used in the robberies parked inside the complex, near Apartment 11218, the residence of CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA.
26. On December 12, 2023, Postal Inspectors submitted affidavits in support of federal search warrants for CODY SMITH's residence located at 9701 Spectrum Drive, Apartment 1205, Austin, Texas 78717; CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA's residence located at 9701 Spectrum Drive, Apartment 11218, Austin, Texas 78717; and 1301 Crossing Place, Unit 1015, Austin, Texas 78741. On that same date, the Honorable Dustin Howell, U.S. Magistrate Judge, authorized the warrants.
27. On December 13, 2023, Postal Inspectors and officers of the Austin Police Department executed the warrants. CODY SMITH was present inside 9701 Spectrum Drive, Apartment 1205, Austin, Texas 78717 when law enforcement entry was made. USPS Arrow Key '83-21826' was recovered inside a duffel bag also containing mail matter stolen from Leander in CODY SMITH's bedroom. Postal Inspectors noted that the listed serial number was the same one documented as stolen during the robbery of Letter Carrier #6 in Leander on December 4, 2023. The stolen mail found in CODY SMITH's bedroom and throughout his residence appeared to be stolen from one or more USPS collection boxes in Leander. Postal Inspectors recovered a significant number of personal and business checks from throughout the residence which had been mailed in Leander. Based on training and experience in similar investigations, I know that the recovered stolen checks and mail were consistent with the use of unlawfully obtained Arrow Key(s) to access USPS volume receptacles, such as blue collection boxes.

28. CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA was present inside 9701 Spectrum Drive, Apartment 11218, Austin, Texas 78717 when law enforcement entry was made. The search of CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA's residence resulted in the recovery of at least eleven semi-automatic rifles and two semi-automatic pistols. Investigating agents also recovered one or more stolen checks, which had been placed in the mail in Leander, Texas. Based on training and experience in similar investigations, I know that the recovered check(s) was consistent with the use of an unlawfully obtained Arrow Key to access multiple USPS volume receptacles, such as blue collection boxes.
29. The search of 1301 Crossing Place, Unit 1015, Austin, Texas 78741, resulted in the recovery of a handgun, loaded rifle magazines, which were consistent with the weapons seized from MOSQUERA's residence, as well as stolen mail matter that had been shredded.
30. Based upon the evidence developed at the scenes of the robberies, evidence recovered from the residential search warrants, and information compiled in subsequent interviews, there is probable cause to believe that CODY SMITH, CHRISTIAN MOSQUERA and other conspirators, aided and abetted by each other, committed violations of federal law, to include Conspiracy to Steal and Unlawfully Possess USPS Arrow Keys, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1704; Conspiracy to Commit Mail Theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1708; and Conspiracy to Rob U.S. Mail or Property of the U.S., in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2114.
31. It is respectfully requested that this Court issue an order sealing, until further order of the Court, all papers submitted in support of this application and the accompanying criminal complaint and arrest warrant documents be sealed until further order of the Court. Based upon my training and experience, I have learned that criminals actively search for criminal affidavits and search warrants via the Internet and disseminate them to other online criminals as they deem appropriate, i.e., post them publicly online through commonly used forums. Premature disclosure of the contents of this affidavit and related documents may have a significant and negative impact on the continuing investigation and may severely jeopardize its effectiveness.



Scott Miller
U. S. Postal Inspector

Attested by telephone and signed electronically under Fed. R. Cr. P. 4.1 on December 14, 2023.



DUSTIN HOWELL
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE